Application No. 09/920,435
Filed: August 1, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1639
Confirmation No.: 6450

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method of screening a ~~natural~~ sample of complex biological material for an affinity ligand that binds to a protein target, comprising:

(1) mixing a protein target and a ~~natural~~ sample of complex biological material in solution to form a reaction mixture;

(2) incubating the reaction mixture under conditions allowing complex formation by the target and any target-binding ligand present in the sample;

(3) passing the reaction mixture through a first size-exclusion medium that removes from the reaction mixture any small molecular weight compounds each having a molecular weight less than a first preset value;

(4) subjecting the size-excluded reaction mixture from step (3) to conditions promoting dissociation of any ligand/target complex into free ligand and free target; and

(5) passing the reaction mixture resulting from step (4) through a second size exclusion medium that removes from the reaction mixture any molecule larger than a second preset value.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first size-exclusion medium removes molecules having a molecular weight of about 2,000 daltons or less.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the first size-exclusion medium removes molecules having a molecular weight of about 1,500 daltons or less.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first size-exclusion medium comprises a gel filtration or size exclusion HPLC column.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein step (4) comprises adding to the size-excluded mixture from step (3), a solution comprising an organic solvent and an organic acid.

6. (Original) The method according to claims 1, 4, or 5, wherein the second size-exclusion medium comprises an ultrafiltration membrane.

7. (Original) The method according to claims 1, 4, or 5, wherein the second size-exclusion medium removes from the reaction mixture, molecules having a molecular weight of about 10,000 daltons or more.

8. (Original) The method according to claims 1, 4, or 5, wherein the second size-exclusion medium removes from the reaction mixture, molecules having a molecular weight of about 3,000 daltons or more.

9. (Original) The method according to claims 1, 4, or 5, wherein the second size-exclusion medium removes from the reaction

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mixture, molecules having a molecular weight of about 2,000 daltons or more.

10. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the ultrafiltration membrane removes from the reaction mixture, molecules having a molecular weight of about 10,000 daltons or more.

11. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the ultrafiltration membrane removes from the reaction mixture, molecules having a molecular weight of about 3,000 daltons or more.

12. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the ultrafiltration membrane removes from the reaction mixture, molecules having a molecular weight of about 2,000 daltons or more.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 21, further comprising:

(7) comparing the analytical results of step (6) with a reference standard.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the reference standard comprises the analytical results of subjecting either a sample of the protein target alone or a mixture of the protein target with a non-target-binding natural sample, to steps (2)-(6).

15.-20. (Cancelled)

21. (Original) The method according to claims 1, 4, or 5, further comprising, after step (5):



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(6) subjecting the reaction mixture resulting from step (5), to at least one structural or functional analysis.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein the at least one analysis in step (6) comprises a member selected from the group consisting of mass spectrometry analysis; liquid chromatography; liquid chromatography coupled on-line with mass spectrometry analysis; infrared spectroscopy; nuclear magnetic resonance; an alternative binding assay; a biochemical assay; a cell-based reporter assay; and an ELISA-based assay.